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Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Monday 10 January 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor Nicholson, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Nelder, Vice Chair.

Councillors Berrow, K Foster, Martin Leaves, Roberts, Mrs Stephens, Wheeler and Wright.

Also in attendance: Gill Peele (Business Manager for Development and Regeneration) ,Councillor Fry (Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development), Jonathan Bell (Head of Development Planning), Peter Ford (Head of Development Management), Fiona Northcott (Spatial Planning Officer) and John Dixon (Planning Delivery Manager) Chris Grace (Head of Economic Development) and Stephen James (Economic Development Co-ordinator)

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.40 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

63. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors in accordance with the code of conduct.

64. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2010 are confirmed as a correct record.

65. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

66. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD.**

The Chair updated the panel on their tracking resolutions and feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

With regards to tracking resolutions, the panel was informed that –

- (a) the request for the Director for Development and Regeneration to clarify the scope of sustainability and climate change (minute 36, 13 September 2010) had been provided to Councillors; this item would therefore be greyed out as complete;

- (b) the Assistant Director for Economic Development was unable to attend the meeting to update Councillors on the prime tourism assets which were currently under utilized; it was agreed that this update would be provided at the next panel meeting. The Visitor Plan will be addressing all citywide assets in the context of the visitor economy and how to present them. An update would be presented once the work was complete which was expected to be approximately June 2011;
- (c) the Democratic Support Officer would seek progress on the Plymouth Community Homes update (minute 60, 8 November 2010);
- (d) the panel had been emailed a response to specific request for information made under the Government Policy Changes item (minute 55, 8 November 2010) on 11 November 2010; this item would therefore be greyed out as complete.

With regards to feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board the Panel was informed by the Democratic Support Officer that all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had been emailed the recommendations from the Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group report and that authority was delegated to the Lead Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to review the report. The report would be submitted to Cabinet on 18 January 2011 for consideration.

Under this item the Chair thanked Members of the Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group for their involvement in that piece of work.

67. **WRITTEN UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES**

The Chair informed the panel that Anthony Payne (Director for Development and Regeneration) was unable to attend the meeting to update the panel on Government Policy changes as well as a financial update, due to illness.

Agreed that the Director for Development and Regeneration would be invited to attend the next panel meeting on 7 March 2011.

68. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT**

Councillor Fry (Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development), Jonathan Bell (Head of Development Planning), Peter Ford (Head of Development Management), Fiona Northcott (Spatial Planning Coordinator) and John Dixon (Planning Delivery Manager) provided the panel with an update on the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (LDF AMR).

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the LDF AMR was submitted to Government on 22 December 2010;

- (b) Plymouth retained its position as the most advanced council for planning services;
- (c) the LDF AMR was a factual statement regarding the Council's performance over the last year;
- (d) 85% targets were still on track however as a result of the recession, it was expected to take at least 3-5 years longer to achieve what the LDF had expected to deliver by 2021;
- (e) the Planning Service recently received another national award from independent Building for Life judges;
- (f) 1200 planning applications had been processed;
- (g) the quality of residential developments had improved;
- (h) Plymouth had more schemes assessed as 'very good quality' than any other authority in the country;
- (i) the Peninsula Medical Dental School and Mount Wise and Marlborough Primary Schools targets had not been met; the latter was no longer in the capital programme;
- (j) the delivery of office development, lifetime homes and onsite renewable energy production were three targets also not on target;
- (k) the employment rate fell for the second year running and the amount of land development for housing and office space was at its lowest;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (l) the report had been submitted to Government and final colour copies of the report would be placed in Members rooms once printed;
- (m) delivering sustainable linked communities was identified as being on track given that work was progressing well on the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Development Plan Document which would include proposals to address issues in each of the city's neighbourhoods outside Area Action Plan areas;
- (n) core strategy target 4.2, to remove 5% of buildings per annum from the 2005 Buildings at Risk Register, had been met, however the Register had been re-based and this target would be reviewed for its effectiveness in the future;
- (o) the gap in life expectancy across the city has been recorded in neighbourhood profiles; a map of these values would be provided to Councillors;
- (p) the housing waiting list had increased however officers were hopeful affordable housing would increase in Plymouth;

- (q) officers would provide Councillors with a list detailing the buildings removed from the buildings at risk register;
- (r) the market recovery plan was not specifically mentioned in the LDF report however the level of activity in the city remained significant;
- (s) St Budeaux District Centre was listed as 8th of the ten worst performing centres in the city despite having no shop vacancies as 5 of its 20 units were hot food take away establishments;
- (t) the legislation regarding contaminated land had been strengthened;
- (u) section 106 money would be legally pursued if it was not received;
- (v) there will no longer be a requirement to send the LDF to Government in the future due to a change in legislation however there would still be a legal requirement to produce annual reports; it was the responsibility of the local authority to determine the form and nature of the reports;

The Chair thanked Councillor Fry and the officers for their attendance and congratulated them on their efforts in compiling the report.

Agreed that –

- (1) an update on the Localism Bill would be added to the next Growth and Prosperity agenda on 7 March 2011;
- (2) officers would provide panel members with a map of the city detailing indicators for the gap in life expectancy across neighbourhoods;
- (3) officers would provide Councillors with a list detailing the buildings removed from the buildings at risk register.

Under this item the Chair gave panel members the opportunity to ask questions to officers on the Localism Bill. The panel was informed that the Localism Bill would include statutory neighbourhood plans in order to empower local communities at a local level.

69. **LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN**

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the LIP was a homes and communities agency requirement;
- (b) Plymouth's LIP was one of the first to be completed and was held up as an example to other local authorities;
- (c) the LIP assisted in securing the funding for the East End Transport Scheme, the Housing Scheme in Devonport and the Life Centre;

- (d) due to the reduced public sector finance, local authorities were forced to do more work with less money and resources;
- (e) one of the benefits of the LIP was to make sites and projects ready for Plymouth to invest in.

The Chair thanked the officers for their update.

70. **LOCAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

Chris Grace (Head of Economic Development) and Stephen James (Economic Development Co-ordinator) provided the panel with an update on the Local Economic Strategy.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the Wealthy Theme Group held a meeting on 11 October 2010 in which it was agreed to carry out a review of the business theme to ensure that the objectives and measures contained within the Action Plan of the Local Economic Strategy (LES) were relevant and fit for purpose;
- (b) the Wealthy Theme Group considered there was no requirement to produce a new strategy for the Local Economic Strategy as the current strategy was considered sufficient;
- (c) 17 organisations were interviewed that had direct involvement in the business support field;
- (d) as a result of feedback it was highlighted that business support in the city was disjointed and fragmented due to a lack of clarity from various organisations that provided support;
- (e) it was recognised that there was a need for business support provision to be aimed at new-starts and existing businesses together other than in isolation as there were clear links that exist between them;
- (f) it was recognised that the six sector priorities were important but a smaller number needed accelerating in order to reach their growth potential;
- (g) a single body was required to drive forward the growth agenda;
- (h) Plymouth needed to better brand and market itself to encourage business growth;
- (i) It was apparent that more focus was needed on the manufacturing sector and marine and renewables sector of the economy;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (j) those interviewed as part of the review process were from key sectors in the local economy and were not purely economy based;
- (k) the LEP was an evolving process that would be amended and added to where necessary;
- (l) the concept of the Devon, Torbay and Somerset Local Economic Partnership was in the first round of proposals; this would be led by the business communities and would go to Government during February 2011 for consideration.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and update.

71. **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 UPDATE**

Phil Heseltine (Head of Transport Strategy) and Sunita Mills (Transport Strategy & Spatial Development Controller) provided the panel with an update on the Local Transport Plan 3.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the consultation on the LTP3 had been ongoing since 25 October 2010 and would end on 14 January 2011. As part of the extensive consultation a radio interview had taken place, 2000 postcards and 1,300 leaflets had been delivered, 4000 stakeholders had been emailed and there were 9 manned events and 11 unmanned events across the city totalling 70 hours of public consultation events. As a result of the consultation there were currently 205 responses, 12 direct emails, 12 responses to the main questionnaire and 29 A4 pages of comments to be collated; these were not final figures as further responses had yet to be counted;
- (b) the final document would be submitted to Council on 11 April 2011;
- (c) the LTP3 sets out the Council's local transport strategy to deliver the growth, carbon reduction and reducing inequality agendas;
- (d) in order for Plymouth to be 'One of Europe's finest, most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life was enjoyed by everyone' it was important for the LTP3 to prioritise investment in the transport network, set out a framework for the growth agenda and to create a city that was well connected with good transport services linking people to jobs, schools and health;
- (e) the LTP3 Transport Strategy aimed to mitigate the effects of climate change, reduce health inequalities between neighbourhoods, reduce the effects the transport network had on the communities which it passed through and use transport to drive the local economy;

- (f) of all cities in England, Plymouth was the only one with a population in excess of 100,000 which was neither connected to the Strategic National Road Network or the Strategic National Rail Network and ranked as having one of the most vulnerable economies in the face of public spending cuts. Officers were keen to make sure the Secretary of State was aware of how vulnerable Plymouth might be the reduction in public sector spending and the importance of good connectivity with the rest of the UK;
- (g) the Comprehensive Spending Review has informed that there was to be a 50% reduction in the capital allocation for transport allocation for the city compared with what was awarded in April 2010;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (h) public transport needed to be a more viable option for residents of the city;
- (i) a number of schemes across the country had been affected by cuts in investment;
- (j) the S106 agreement for the Sherford development requires the developer to contribute 11.8 million pounds Capital and 4.5 million pounds of revenue funding to support transport on the Eastern Corridor;

The Chair thanked the officers for their update and all of the hard work put into the consultation process.

72. **HOUSING STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER**

Agreed that this item would be deferred to the next panel meeting on 7 March 2011.

73. **QUARTERLY SCRUTINY REPORT**

The panel noted their quarterly scrutiny report.

74. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted their work programme for 2010/2011 and added an update on the Localism Bill on 7 March 2011.

75. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.

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